

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: July 15, 2010

Meeting No.: 113

Project: 25th Street Station

Phase: Schematic Architecture

Location: Maryland / 25th / Howard / 24th Streets Vicinity

PRESENTATION:

Donald Kann, of KANN Partners, began by reviewing the approved master plan (and some minor changes to it) for the redevelopment of the former Anderson Auto dealership and miscellaneous other properties. He then presented elevations for the various buildings in the development as well as perspective views. He also discussed the materials for the project. Jennifer Leonard of STV presented more detailed site plans for the various open spaces and streetscapes.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

As the project moves into schematic design of the buildings, streetscapes, and open spaces, the Panel feels that there are several issues that need to be addressed in order to effectively address the goals established for the project, including:

Edges of the development. The Panel was in agreement that the parking edge along the east side of Howard Street needed to be defined by a low wall rather than simply landscaping. The concern is that landscaping only will not effectively screen the parking, is inconsistent with the edge treatment elsewhere, and will be difficult to maintain in the long run. The use of planting beds for bio-retention is applauded and any wall should be detailed in a way to allow for storm water runoff. Also, Option B for the wall and fence at 24th and Sisson Street was preferred. Additionally, the Panel would like the design team to reconsider the angled parking along 25th and Huntingdon. Although angled parking is used elsewhere in Baltimore for traffic calming, it is typically used in longer blocks. This location seems out of place and disrupts the street edge. Finally, one Panel member suggested that screening should be considered along the parking lot and the back of the storage building.

Relate the scale and architectural character of the project with that of the surrounding communities. Panel members were particularly concerned with the amount of blank wall along Maryland Avenue. While the design team is trying to provide some relief with the inclusion of window-scaled panels and the suggestion of murals, these do nothing to truly activate the pedestrian nature of the project. This is due to the interior nature of the project, which has been questioned as to its compatibility in an urban environment. The design team should give additional study to how the retail at 25th and Maryland can turn the corner and engage Maryland Avenue, the retail on the south end of the site adjacent to the parking lot entrance and turning the corner to 24th Street. It was recommended that additional entrances to the residential units be added along Maryland Avenue to provide street activity. The main lobby entrance, and entrance portal to the parking lot, also needs further study; as shown they lend no quality to the experience or façade of Maryland Avenue.

Architectural Treatment. While the project is presented by the design team as one development, the Panel is concerned that there is too much “sameness” in regards to materials, color, and architectural treatment. Additional variety is recommended to try and better fit the project into its urban context. This includes treating the feature corner towers differently depending on their location, not resurfacing the GM building with the brick-like material but instead repairing it and leaving it white, and reconsidering the massing of the building along Maryland Avenue. Rather than trying to mimic the rowhouses across the street, the design team should look at local apartment buildings (such as at the corner of Charles and 25th Street) as a model to reference.

Additionally, there seemed to be little relationship between the first floor storefront treatments and the upper floor window patterns, whether along Maryland Avenue or interior along the parking lot. The relief of the building, sections that set back or project out, seem confused and need further development. Finally, the detailing of the project, sills, headers, cornices, canopies, etc. are critical to the success of the architecture and should be presented at a larger scale in future presentations.

Integrate and connect pedestrian and vehicular circulation. The scale of the project, and its fit into the urban fabric, is still of concern. As has been recommended previously, there is an opportunity to break up the large blocks and create new “streets” that traverse the project. While a pedestrian connection is made from 24th Street to Huntingdon and Maryland to Howard, these connections still need additional work to make them feel like pedestrian connections rather than simply sidewalks in front of stores. The Panel would like to see enlarged sections of these two areas to better understand the size, tree planting, paving, and other treatments.

Walmart. The Panel questioned the treatment of the north facing wall of Walmart and the access to its loading area. The Panel would like the design team to reconsider access to the loading area from the main entrance on 25th and instead provide the access solely from Huntingdon (adjacent to the small retail strip of shops). This would eliminate the wide turning lane and allow for better pedestrian access as well as a better corner treatment of the store. The Panel would also like to see the elevations for the store that face the railroad as well as views of this elevation from Huntingdon and Sisson.

Next presentation. In addition to comments made above, Panel members would also like to see additional information that explains the relief of the facades (as presented they look to be very flat), larger elevations to better understand the detailing, larger scale site plans for key locations (as noted), and more information regarding the treatment of the edge and buildings along the railroad.

Several members from the surrounding community made public comments regarding the project. Their concerns regarded bike lanes and traffic patterns along 25th and 26th Street, fire truck access, trash pick-up, and the amount of blank walls along Maryland Avenue due to the retail backing to the street on the first floor.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic Approval withheld.

Attending:

Donald Kann – Kann Partners

Tony Cortreal, Jennifer Leonard, Susan Williams, Matt Ford, Mary Stevenson, Anna Owen – STV, Inc.

Jon Laria - Ballard Spahr

Caroline Paff - WV Urban

Rich Kaminski - Medfield - 7th District

Sandy Sparks- CVCA

Judith Kunst - GRIA

Kara Kunst - Baltimore City of Baltimore

Valerie Eickelberger - Whiting-Turner

Douglas Armstrong - RNA

Laura Kindseth - OGCA

Leslie Harris - Harris Kupfer Architects

Amy Gellatly, Cathy Yates - Residents

John Viles - HFCA

Faith Evans, Sam Culpepper - Marks Thomas

Emily Eig - UDARP

Jay Brodie, Leon Pinkett – BDC

Messrs. Bowden, Britt, Cameron, Ramberg – Panel

Gary Cole, Gary Letteron, Lisa Morris, Wolde Ararsa, Erv McDaniel, Anthony Cataldo - Planning

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
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MEETING MINUTES

Project: Pierce's Park

Phase: Schematic

Location: Pier 5, Inner Harbor

PRESENTATION:

Laurie Schwartz, Executive Director of Waterfront Partnership, introduced the proposal to redesign an area of the Inner Harbor Pier 5 as a family-oriented park. This proposal is part of an effort to improve the connection between the Inner Harbor and Harbor East and is a collaboration with Family Alliance, a community group comprised of families who reside in downtown Baltimore. The new park will honor the memory of Pierce Flanagan and is being designed to incorporate his ideals. Mahan Rykiel, landscape architects, is designing the park.

Scott Rykiel of Mahan Rykiel, with lead designer Peng Gu, presented the project. Mr. Rykiel stated the five principles that are guiding the design: 1) Pierce in Nature – a tribute to Pierce Flanagan's life as a adventurer, risk-taker, sailor, skier, biker, and poet; 2) Families and Children – an interest in ensuring that the design is focused on these end-users; 3) Green Space and Shade – the inclusion of both open active areas and quiet more protected areas; 4) Sustainability – a commitment to the Clean Harbor Initiative, use of native plants, and full integration of sustainable materials; 5) Art – use of non-traditional forms for play equipment, such as a willow branches to create a tunnel, stone sculpture as a climbing toy. The resulting proposal is tripartite in design, composed of two large curvilinear forms and one smaller one as buffer. The play areas are separated by a series of walkways composed of recycled materials presenting an organic frame around and connecting the play areas. Focused pole lighting will be used. Fences are not included but low mounds will be used to establish boundaries at the walkways.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The Panel appreciates the need for more play space for residents, the application of the five principles that are guiding the design, and the resulting artistry of the design; however, there was serious concern as to the potential success of integrating this type of park into the present use of the area and the current circulation patterns of the tourists and residents. The following specific comments were made:

- A. **Fencing** – The Panel is united on the need to avoid traditional fencing and is appreciative of the intention of using alternate approaches to securing play areas.
- B. **Circulation** – There is a need to channel crowds traveling from nearby activities/parking lot around and/or through the park. The role of the central walkway *vis a vis* the perimeter paths is not strong enough. A decision should be made as to how the path is supposed to work and the design strengthened to reflect that decision. The plan, design, and materials of the walkways should serve as way finding aids to guide the crowds and, thereby, protect the integrity of the play areas from passers-by. The connection between the two active parks needs to be addressed as part of this study.
- C. **Integration of the New Park with the Setting** – Although there was a difference of opinion as to whether the existing tree grid should be integrated into the park design *per se*, there is agreement as to the need to resolve the relationship between “new and old.” This includes addressing how the curvilinear design relates to the existing tree grid, the

relationship of the park to the parking lot (and what could be done to remove or reduce the size of the lot), and whether the park's grassy areas could be connected across to President Street.

- D. ***Handling the Area's Existing Civic Role*** – The design is presently in an excellent direction in its efforts to meet the project's five design principles; however, it must also address a sixth principle: maintaining the site's existing civic role. The area is one that is presently used by tourists and residents alike in passing from one destination to another. The continuation of this use should be planned for, because, despite the insertion of a park, the need for the area as a route to other destinations remains and without careful planning, the present use will continue and do so in a manner that will interfere with the success of the new park. The park's design needs to be strong enough to be able to both successfully change the understanding of the area's "sense of place" into one of a park/play destination for resident families, **and** to continue to allow tourists and others to pass through or around it in their travels. The tourists should be able to understand where they are supposed to walk as they pass en route to another destination, have the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the park, and to make their way through or around the park without compromising the experience of the park users. It is suggested that perhaps blending the two active play areas into one would provide a stronger statement, satisfy the users' needs, and allow for a clearer design component. However, the point is more that the park needs to make sense in that specific location and, through a strong and clear design, guide the movement in a way that is complementary to the park while functioning effectively for the greater area's users.

PANEL ACTION:

Schematic Approval Withheld

Attending:

Laurie Schwartz – Waterfront Partnership

Scott Rykiel, Peng Gu – Mahan Rykiel

Molly Moyer – GBC

Ed Gunts – The Sun

Jay Brodie, Paul Dombrowski, Irene Van Sant, Arlisa Anderson, Ben Stone – BDC

Ms. Eig; Messrs. Bowden, Ramberg, Britt and Cameron – Panel

Gary Cole, Jill Lemke, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter - Planning

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
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Date: July 15, 2010

Meeting No: 113

Project: New Waverly Pk-8 School

Phase: Final

Location: North Baltimore

PRESENTATION:

Steve Parker of Grimm+Parker Architects made a final presentation of this new school project at an existing school site in the Waverly community.

COMMENTS OF THE PANEL:

Members of the Panel commented as follows:

1. To express overall approval of the design presented.
2. To question if there is sufficient paved area at the main entrance.
3. To express disappointment at the fact that materials proposed are not presented at this final phase.
4. To recommend that final material and color choices be presented to staff and through them to the Panel at a future meeting.

PANEL ACTION:

Final approval with comments and request for final material and color choice submission.

Attending:

Phillip L. Scott – Facility Design and Construction Department, BCPS

Steve Parker, Paul Bradshaw – Grimm+Parker

Jay Brodie, Paul Dombrowski – BDC

Ms. Eig, Messrs. Bowden, Britt, Cameron and Ramberg – Panel

Gary Cole, Wolde Ararsa, Anthony Cataldo, Bob Quilter- Planning